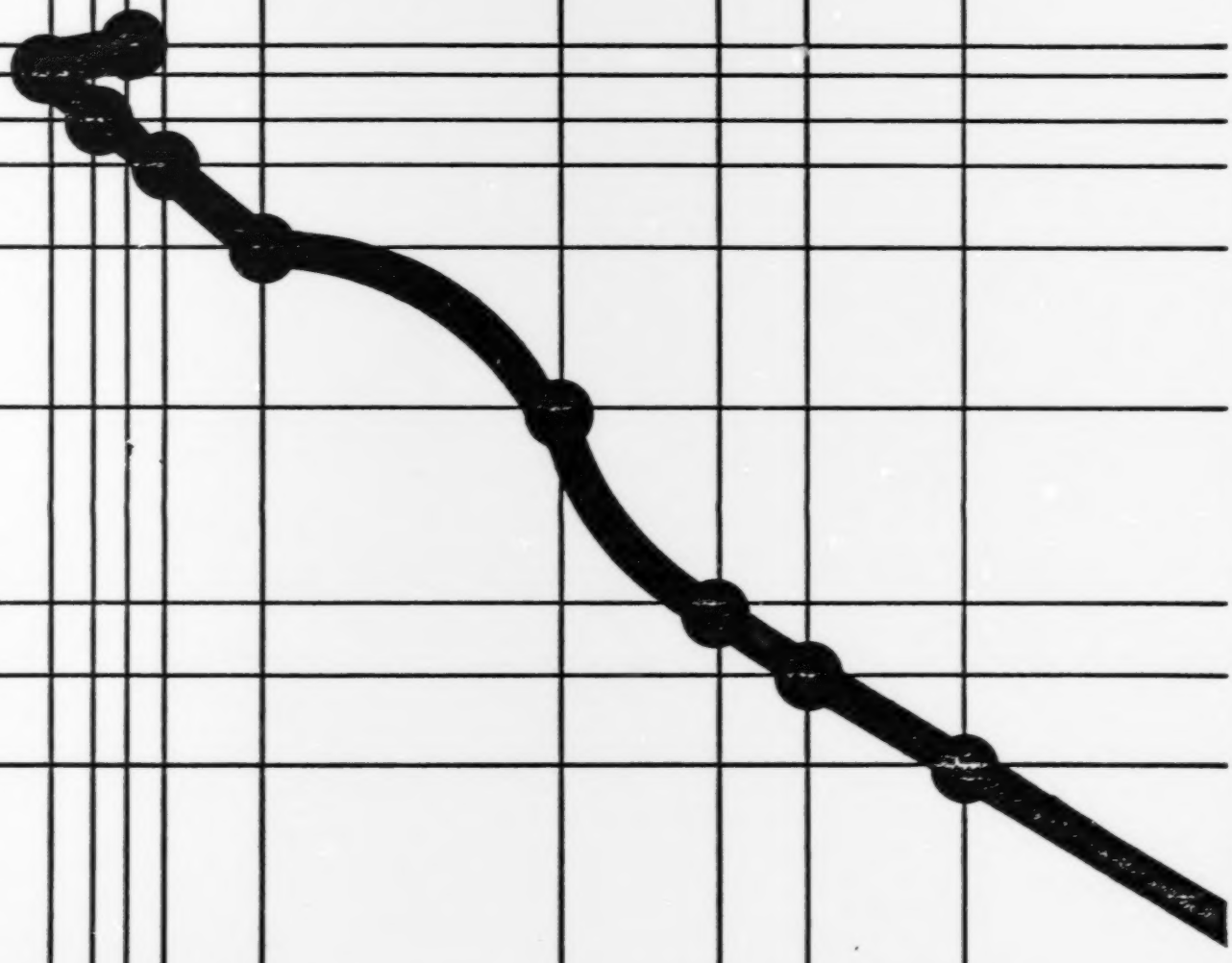
Planning for the Community & Rapid Transit

AN OVERALL PLANNING CONTEXT FOR ALRT DEVELOPMENT

City Manager's Summary Report of 13 May, 1983

Director of Planning's Full Report of 6 May, 1983



June
1983

Planning Department
City of Vancouver
Director: Ray Spaxman

MANAGER'S REPORT

DATE: May 13, 1983

TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Development *on 2 June, 1983 and City Council on 14 June, 1983*
SUBJECT: An Overall Planning Context for ALRT Development : Summary Report

CLASSIFICATION: RECOMMENDATION

The Director of Planning has submitted a report on this subject dated May 6, 1983. In summary, he reports as follows:

INTRODUCTION

In order to provide an overall context within which planning for each ALRT station area can take place, the purposes of this report are:

- to outline basic public objectives from a city-wide and local perspective to guide ALRT station area planning; and
- to propose broad planning guidelines indicating preferred development around ALRT stations and describe the nature of change suggested by the guidelines.

PUBLIC OBJECTIVES

The Director of Planning proposes eight public objectives, which emerge from either a city-wide or local perspective. In short summary form these are:

City-Wide Perspective - Objectives
1. Minimize transportation and other public costs;
2. Minimize the costs of living and doing business in Greater Vancouver;
3. Create interesting and comfortable places to live and work;
4. Conserve Greater Vancouver's scarce land resource.

Local Perspective - Objectives.
5. Minimize negative impacts of ALRT on local residents;
6. Ensure overall neighbourhood stability even while accommodating new development;
7. Enhance the quality of neighbourhood environments;
8. Foster citizens' influence in ALRT design and station area plans.

PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR ALRT RELATED DEVELOPMENT

In response to the above objectives and having further regard for the nature of the existing environment along the ALRT alignment, development guidelines are proposed in the report related to the following areas:

General Guidelines
Three guidelines call for fostering mixed uses near all ALRT stations (Guideline A), encouraging housing near all stations (B), and concentrating regionally-significant uses in the central area or at regional town centres outside Vancouver (C).

Core Area Guidelines
Three further guidelines indicate that downtown plans and zoning are suitable for ALRT-related development (D), that downtown developments and stations should be closely linked and integrated (E), and that the industrial zoning east of the Main Street station should remain while mixed-use new development occurs through a new comprehensive plan at the station (F).

Suburban Area Guidelines
Three final guidelines suggest that the dominant use around suburban stations shall be residential (G), that commercial uses in these areas should be local serving (H), and that changes should occur primarily on the basis of new neighbourhood concept plans (I).

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Following these guidelines, it is estimated that at least 5,000 new housing units might be accommodated near suburban Vancouver ALRT stations and that only 25,000 sq. m. (270,000± sq.ft.) of new commercial construction will probably be needed. As such, the station area planning emphasis should be on identifying new higher density housing sites without major disruption of existing communities and on finding alternative acceptable uses for some excess existing commercially zoned land.

THE NEXT STEP

The Director of Planning projects a continued need to further evaluate the assumptions and projections of his analysis, to proceed with the community dialogue through which specific plans will emerge and to further explore the potential roles of the City to foster preferred development.

RECOMMENDATION

The Director of Planning recommends that Council adopt the objectives and guidelines as outlined in detail in his report of 6 May, 1983 as a working context for ALRT station area planning on the understanding that he will report back on this matter, including more refined housing and commercial growth targets, upon completion of upcoming technical studies."

The City Manager RECOMMENDS that the recommendation of the Director of Planning be approved.

On 14 June, 1983 City Council RESOLVED:

THAT the objectives and guidelines as outlined be received as a working context for ALRT station area planning; with a further report back on this matter (including more refined housing and commercial growth targets) on completion of upcoming technical studies;

FURTHER THAT this report be included in the public discussions scheduled for the Vancouver Coreplan.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT 1983 05 06

TO: City Manager (for Standing Committee on Planning and Development

SUBJECT: An Overall Planning Context For ALRT Development

CLASSIFICATION: RECOMMENDATION

The Director of Planning reports as follows:

"INTRODUCTION

Local area planning programs are underway in those east side neighbourhoods within a ten-minute walk of ALRT stations outside downtown. Concept plans for these areas will come forward in early 1984. Discussions are also underway to achieve linkage of downtown stations to nearby buildings and some new downtown projects close to ALRT are under consideration. Because land use changes set off by ALRT may have a significant impact on the urban pattern of the city and could help or hinder resolution of existing growth problems, it is important to have an overall context within which planning for each station area can take place.

The purposes of this report are:
- to outline basic public objectives from a city-wide and local perspective to guide ALRT station area planning; and
- to propose broad planning guidelines indicating preferred development around ALRT stations and describe the nature of change suggested by the guidelines.

PUBLIC OBJECTIVES FROM CITY-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

Growth trends and patterns in Vancouver and the region over many years have resulted in several problem conditions. These include an imbalance between office employment and housing potential, an increasing distance between home and workplace and a tendency for "urban sprawl". These conditions have significant implications for public budgets, environmental quality, livability and private costs.

First, the city has a much higher capacity for core area office employment growth than for providing nearby housing for the new workers. Whereas, under existing zoning, the downtown commercial area can grow to about three times its present size, there is little practical zoning capacity remaining for housing. While this fosters a strong, vibrant downtown, it also results in sustained high city housing prices and the necessity for many core workers to live outside Vancouver.

Second, partly because of the above situation, more people have to travel longer distances between home and workplace because the opportunities for them to live within their means close to work are limited. This results in higher travel costs for the individual, greater public costs in providing for transportation (transit and the road system), and increasing disruption of neighbourhoods through which commuters must travel.

Third, the pattern of residential development outside the inner-city has tended to be very dispersed and of low density. The results of this "sprawl" are high public costs to provide urban services and a tendency not to be able to create the critical mass of activities that provides interesting urban environments with diverse opportunities. Another result is a rapid consumption of the region's scarce open space.

In the context of planning initiatives such as the Livable Region Program and Vancouver Coreplan that have been conceived to address these broad concerns, the following public objectives are suggested specifically to guide ALRT-related planning.

Objective 1 - Minimize Transportation and Other Public Costs...

- By achieving a closer proximity of related land uses, especially jobs and resident labour force, thus cutting growth in new travel demand and reducing future transportation investment;

- By increasing the likelihood that rush-hour commuters will select public transit because it is accessible, thus reducing the need for new automobile-related facilities which tend to be more expensive;

- By fostering transit use throughout the day, not just during rush-hours, thus minimizing the per-passenger costs of system operations;

- By locating new development in areas of surplus public services, facilities and transportation capacity, thus minimizing further investment to secure an adequate infrastructure.

Objective 2 - Minimize the Costs of Living and Doing Business in Greater Vancouver...

- By maintaining an adequate supply of housing and business buildings;

- By limiting growth in taxation through maximized use of existing public services/ facilities before new public spending;

- By making routine trips, such as the journey to work, shorter in order to cut private travel costs.

Objective 3 - Create Interesting and Comfortable Places to Live and Work...

- By encouraging a mixture of complementary uses;

- By developing at sufficient density for economical provision of amenities and supportive uses - and to foster social interaction and quality urban design;

- By locating development to take advantage of high amenity while preserving features which contribute to environmental quality;

- By encouraging a switch from cars to transit in order to lessen the negative effects of auto traffic on neighbourhoods.

Objective 4 - Conserve Greater Vancouver's Scarce Land Resource...

- By developing at the highest densities consistent with livability standards, neighbourhood acceptability and market feasibility;

- By encouraging redevelopment of land containing obsolete uses.

PUBLIC OBJECTIVES FROM A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

In community discussions over the last year, local people generally indicate an acceptance of rapid transit nearby. They know it will provide them with better access and convenience and, for some, increased land values. They also know, however, it will have some costs to them and the development it engenders will cause significant changes in the neighbourhoods they have enjoyed. Many people living adjacent to the ALRT alignment worry about the direct effect of the system on their homes. These sentiments have reinforced Council's request for a Commercial Drive tunnel, but in other areas the call has mostly been for specific protective measures. People also worry about a decline in their quality of life caused by destabilization of land values and zoning that could pressure them to move; or an influx of new people that will cause crowding, shortage of services and a different community character. Another viewpoint of some residents is that ALRT-related change can be directed to enhance their neighbourhood by forcing an upgrading of public and private services, facilities, traffic controls and open spaces. They hope that resources will be committed to temper and accommodate the inevitable changes.

There is continued appeal for consultation and citizens' participation in public decisions about transit and station area development. For example, citizen response to the City's station area planning program has been particularly strong and supportive.

To respond to these local concerns, the following public objectives are suggested to augment those stemming from an overall perspective.

Objective 5 - Minimize Negative Impacts of ALRT on Local Residents...

- By designing the ALRT system, right-of-way and station precincts to minimize noise, loss of privacy, intrusions, parking/traffic overspill and construction disruption in the adjacent neighbourhoods;

- By orchestrating over time land use changes adjacent to the ALRT so as to resolve specific impact dilemmas;

- By ensuring equitable relocation arrangements for people displaced by ALRT or the development it engenders.

Objective 6 - Insure Overall Neighbourhood Stability Even While Accommodating New Development...

- By respecting neighbourhood habits, patterns and landmarks;

- By providing for new developments at locations and in forms that do not always necessitate wholesale residential redevelopment;

- By striving for compatability of new and existing development in scale, character and type of activity;

- By early adoption of clear land use plans so as to limit random speculation.

Objective 7 - Enhance the Quality of Neighbourhood Environments...

- By resolving existing local problems (land use, social, traffic and parking) preparatory to an influx of new people;

- By matching growth in population and facilities so existing people do not experience deterioration in services they now enjoy;

- By reinforcing amenities and features residents feel contribute to positive local character.

Objective 8 - Foster Citizens' Influence in ALRT Design and Station Area Plans...

- By broad and sustained consultation and input of interested people during plan preparation and implementation beyond the minimum requirement of Public Hearings.

PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR ALRT-RELATED DEVELOPMENT

In order to provide a framework for specific planning studies and to give basic direction for those contemplating specific development decisions, several planning guidelines are proposed to articulate preferred forms of development related to ALRT. These guidelines, summarized in Appendix I, are a response to the objectives outlined above, having further regard for the nature of the existing environment along the ALRT alignment.

General Guidelines

The regional development pattern has historically sustained a strong downtown as a main focus for employment. In order to bring housing and job sites closer together through ALRT, it is logical that new housing be focussed into the ALRT station areas with enough associated commerce to meet everyday needs. At the same time, ALRT could result in decentralization of some regionally-significant commercial activities that would otherwise have settled downtown. To the extent that this occurs, it is preferable that these activities be deflected to the established regional town centres outside Vancouver in order to generate the "critical mass" to ensure these centres become increasingly viable. This will create vibrant, diverse places that provide mutual proximity for business, workers and the support services they require. Thus, some places will become of regional or broader significance while others will take on a localized, neighbourhood character. The following guidelines summarize these general intentions.

Guideline A (Re: mixed uses)

Mixed use developments shall be fostered in the vicinity of all ALRT stations, with different emphases depending upon the developing needs of the particular neighbourhood. Uses which encourage both peak and non-peak transit ridership are preferred.

Guideline B (Re: open housing option)

Housing shall be encouraged in the vicinity of all ALRT stations.

Guideline C (Re: concentration of regionally-significant uses)

Regionally-significant activities such as corporate or related offices, large-scale general shopping, major hotels and large institutions should primarily be concentrated in the Central Area and at GVRD-designated regional town centres outside the City.

These guidelines will allow for development around all transit stations in Vancouver. While no station area will be exempt from change, the nature and scale of change will depend upon balancing local limitations and city-wide needs.

Core Area Guidelines - Seabus, Discovery, Granville, Stadium and Main Street Stations

In the downtown, ALRT will tend to re-organize development in space and time and is likely to generate some new development. It is probable that sites near transit stations will be preferred by the private sector for earlier development based upon the value of extra accessibility and exposure. It is also probable that pedestrian patterns will change to focus somewhat on the stations. Yet ALRT is not the sole or necessarily even the predominent determinent of change because the downtown development process and urban environment are shaped by a multiplicity of forces. As such, ALRT will not necessitate new downtown plans or a rethinking of downtown development potentials. Special care will have to be taken,however,in shaping acceptable developments to ensure integration with ALRT.

The Main Street station area on the edge of the core includes much undeveloped and underdeveloped land. This provides an opportunity to accommodate new land uses that reinforce transit without necessarily dislocating many of the activities (and jobs) historically associated with the area. As such, within easy walking distance of the Main Street station, it is appropriate to develop a somewhat self-contained mix of compatible and complementary uses that reflect the proximity to downtown, False Creek, the Expo '86 site and the ALRT and CNR stations. The existing industrial, transportation and distribution nature of the large area south and east of the immediate station environs would be retained for the foreseeable future.

These intentions are expressed in the following guidelines.

Guideline D (Re: primacy of downtown and B.C. Place policy)

ALRT-related development in the core shall satisfy existing (for downtown) or pending (for B.C. Place) official development plans and zoning since changing public policy in the core must reflect a diversity of influences of which ALRT is only one factor. The predominant use at downtown stations will be commercial.

Guideline E (Re: integration of stations and development)

The form of development in the core area within walking distance of ALRT stations should maximize convenient and attractive pedestrian linkages and design orientation to the stations and should provide for the day-to-day needs of transit riders.

Guideline F (Re: East False Creek mixed use in industrial setting)

In the East False Creek area the existing industrial zoning shall remain for the foreseeable future except that close to the ALRT station, there shall be mixed use based upon a new comprehensive development plan.

Suburban Area Guidelines - Broadway, Nanaimo, 29th Avenue and Joyce Stations

Vancouver suburban stations are envisaged as the focus for varying degrees of new

development within a five to seven minute walk of ALRT. Because of the nature of the existing neighbourhood setting, it is proposed that most of this new development be housing, primarily to accommodate commuters who will use ALRT. This residential emphasis is also one key to redress the present imbalance in office and housing potentials in the City. To the extent that new commercial development occurs, it is preferable for this to have a local orientation to serve the day-to-day needs of new and existing residents in the vicinity. Such activities as neighbourhood offices (doctors, lawyers and others providing immediate services), retailers of convenience goods (food, drugs, hardware, etc.) and personal services (hairdressers, cleaners, etc.) are preferred.

It is expected that Broadway and Joyce station areas will provide the greatest realistic development possibilities but Nanaimo and 29th Avenue station areas will also see some change. To orchestrate change as a positive force, specific station area plans are necessary as well as assurances that development will essentially follow these plans. The following guidelines should influence this planning.

Guideline G (Re: housing dominance)

Development in suburban ALRT station areas shall be predominantly residential, with a variety of household types based upon market demand, the City's social objectives and a preference to house core commuters. Housing densities shall be as high as is practical, having regard for:

- sharing among neighbourhoods,
- ALRT capacity,
- capacity of local areas to accommodate new buildings and people and,
- environmental requirements of different types of households.

Guideline H (Re: local-serving commerce preferred)

Preferred commercial uses in suburban ALRT station areas shall be small-scaled and locally oriented - sufficient to serve the day-to-day needs of neighbourhood residents and the occasional needs of transit commuters. Planning for new commercial activities at stations should be sensitive to the impact of these facilities on nearby existing district and local commercial centres.

Guideline I (Re: development via neighbourhood plans)

Changing land uses and densification in suburban ALRT station areas shall generally not be allowed on an ad hoc or 'spot' basis and shall occur primarily through implementation of new comprehensive neighbourhood concept plans and related rezonings.

In suburban station area planning, key issues will be how much housing and commercial activity should be accommodated.

From a broad, conceptual viewpoint, a very schematic projection suggests that at least 5,000 additional housing units may be accommodated within a five to seven minute walk of the four suburban stations based upon several assumptions: - share of ridership to reach ALRT capacity; share of projected future city housing demand; capacity of the existing physical/social infrastructure; and form of new development favouring low-rise, family accommodation at densities along the lines of South False Creek. This preliminary expectation for new housing will be reviewed through the local area planning program in terms of community opinion and specific findings about the adequacy of services and availability of developable sites. A sensitive densification strategy would imply that:

- vacant sites near stations will quickly be built upon at densities higher than now evident nearby;
- housing will tend to supplant other land uses now in place that have low viability;
- there will be consistent efforts to infill new housing units within the existing residential fabric (including secondary suites, multiple-residential conversions, new construction on residual private areas and designating new housing sites from excess public areas); and

- there will be some conventional redevelopment of single family residential property for higher density housing, where this is consistent with local needs and goals.

Emphasizing local oriented commerce around suburban ALRT stations requires consideration of several existing realities. From a regional perspective, the intent is to deflect larger-scaled regionally-significant uses to the regional town centres (RTC's). Yet, because there are many alternative general business locations other than at RTC's and because most of these reinforce auto rather than transit use, outright prohibition of regional commerce in the suburban station areas could work against transit goals. A review is needed through the GVRD of the pattern of commercial zoning in the region and its implications for RTC development. Some differentiation of commercial uses and focusing in favour of RTC's could result from this work. Around Vancouver's suburban stations an approach is in order whereby local commerce is preferred but where actual limitations on commercial square footage are set by the neighbourhood plans, by the economics of project mix (assuming a residential dominance) and by the nature and amount of specific neighbourhood impacts.

From a local perspective, it is estimated that existing C1 and C2 commercial zoning would accommodate much more development than will be required to meet purely local needs, even after the provision of a maximum amount of new housing. This pattern of zoning is not well oriented to ALRT stations and the uses it allows are not especially tailored to transit commuters or local resident needs. Yet the existing zoning has created expectations by landowners and neighbours that can not be ignored. A starting point for establishing commercial provisions as the areas adjust to ALRT is the amount of floor space now in place. This is about 100,000 sq. meters (1,100,000 sq. ft.) in the commercial catchment areas oriented to the four suburban transit stations. (This includes significant portions along Kingsway near the three easterly stations). Through the planning process it is appropriate to strive toward an ultimate commercial zoning consistent with the 125,000 sq. meter (1,350,000 sq. ft.) of floor space that is estimated to be needed for local purposes. To sensitively implement this approach suggests that:

- there will need to be considerable justification for any increase in commercial potential in the vicinity of transit stations;
- alternative use for some existing commercially-zoned land will be sought where this is consistent with other local needs and goals;
- commercial development that does occur at stations will be primarily justified as replacing existing premises and serving the direct requirements of the area in which it occurs;
- commercial activities proposed near transit stations will be carefully scrutinized to limit negative parking, traffic, scale, noise or other impacts on neighbours; and
- local decisions need to be coupled with a broader review of commercial zoning.

THE NEXT STEP

This report has presented a first idea of the overall factors that should guide ALRT-motivated development in Vancouver. It has also provided a preliminary sense of what kind of change should result through application of several basic guidelines. To translate this work into a more operational policy context for ALRT station area planning, the following further steps are necessary:

1. The assumptions and projections outlined herein need to be critically evaluated and tested in terms of market trends, expectations and requirements, especially to firm up housing and commercial targets. Also, review of general commercial zoning in the City and the GVRD should occur with the objective of reinforcing the regional town centres.

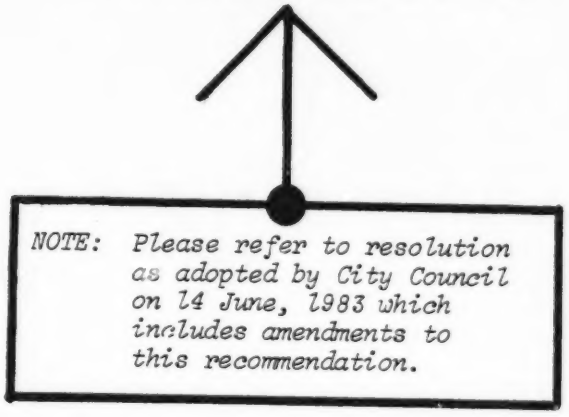
2. The planning dialogue within the affected local communities must proceed in order to more fully understand the realistic constraints and opportunities inherent in each station area.

3. The role of government in implementing change as now envisioned must be carefully explored to determine the need, costs and benefits of action (such as participation in joint development) beyond the normal exercise of planning and control over development. Experiences elsewhere should provide valuable lessons.

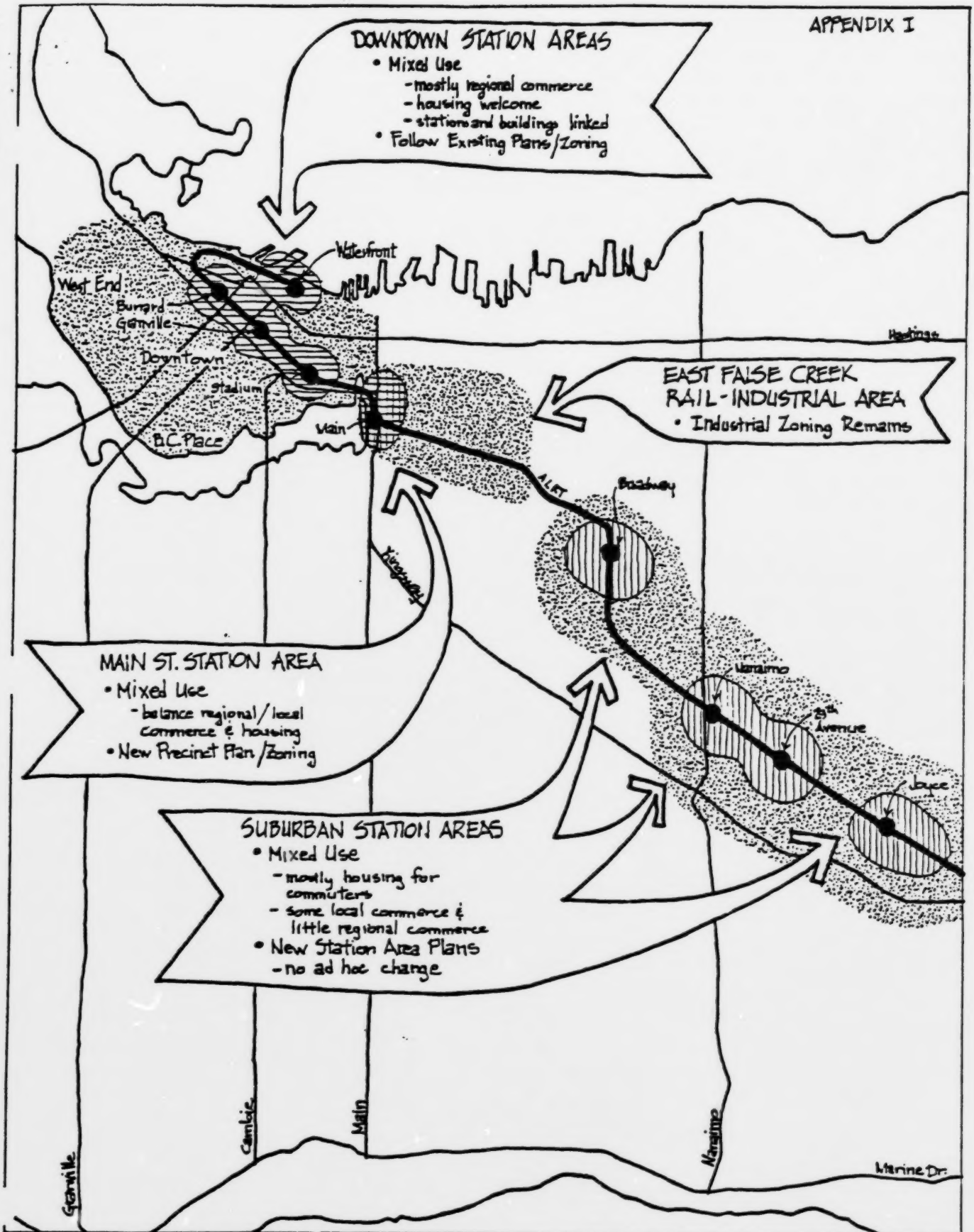
Based upon Council endorsation of this report, the Director of Planning intends to proceed with the market analysis, joint development study and general commercial review proposed above utilizing resources that are already budgeted for ALRT studies. The local dialogue will be pursued through the station area planning program which is well underway.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council adopt the objectives and guidelines outlined in this report as a working context for ALRT station area planning on the understanding that the Director of Planning will report back on this matter, including more refined housing and commercial growth targets, upon completion of upcoming technical studies."


NOTE: Please refer to resolution as adopted by City Council on 14 June, 1983 which includes amendments to this recommendation.

APPENDIX I



An overall Planning Context for ALRT Development : Planning Guidelines	Date May '83	↑
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POOR

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